

# Few takers for private engineering colleges

## Over 4,000 BTech seats remain unfilled after counselling

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For 16 private engineering colleges in the state, it is a "perform-or-perish" situation as more than 4,000 BTech seats remained unfilled after counselling in these colleges that are allegedly being run as "teaching shops" without the mandatory labs, faculty and infrastructure.

The counselling for the BTech course, including for the government-run Jawaharlal Engineering College, Sundarnagar, ended today.

The plight of the private engineering colleges is clear from the fact that these are offering a rebate of 10 per cent in the fees to lure students to their colleges.

There are colleges who

have between 100 and 120 seats, but most of these remain vacant, sources said.

Talking to The Tribune, Ajay Mittal, Principal Secretary, Technical Education, who chaired a meeting of technical officers and principals at the Directorate of Technical Education, Sundernagar, today, said, "It is a good sign that students and parents are questioning colleges over labs and other facilities at private colleges. We have told the colleges to either perform or perish.

He said the department had no control over private engineering colleges as these were controlled by the AICTE.

Students do not seem to be preferring the private engineering colleges in the state, four of which are located in the Mandi-Sundernagar belt,

as most of these do not have proper labs, faculty and other facilities for students, rued students and parents.

Though more than 4,700 applications for BTech were received this year, the first preference was for Sundernagar Engineering College, which offers four courses in electronics, textile, mechanical and civil engineering, and has filled 252 seats.

In the second year, the college filled 46 through lateral entry for students who had done diplomas.

It is for the first time that these colleges will be affiliated to Technical University, Hamirpur, the home district of Chief Minister Prem Kumar Dhumal, who had decided to start a university there last year.

However, the plight of the university is such that it is

being run from four rooms of the polytechnic college, Hamirpur, as it has no campus of its own.

The approval given to these private colleges by the AICTE is yet to come under the scanner despite the fact that most of these are run on an ad hoc basis making a mockery of the norms. Seats are allotted on the whims and fancies of the authorities.

The counselling for BTech ended today and only around 2,000 BTech seats have been filled of the about 6,000 seats that engineering colleges in Himachal offer.

The top 252 seats went to Government Engineering College, Sundernagar, while the remaining 1,748 were filled by private colleges, said BTech admission in charge TR Sharma.